United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 26, 2026

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Paula Stannard
Director, Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy and Director Stannard,

We write regarding the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) recent decision to launch a needless and wasteful federal investigation into the State of Oregon regarding our state laws that require private health insurers to cover abortion services. Upon reviewing this alarming inquiry, we must ask why the Trump administration is meddling in state laws regarding health care, especially when Oregonians have been abundantly clear on a matter that should have no interaction with the federal government.

This investigation is a gross overreach of federal authority. You are weaponizing your department to target states where reproductive health care remains legal in a blatant attempt to deny women the care they need. Oregon has a long, proud history of protecting access to comprehensive reproductive health care. Our democratically elected state legislature passed these coverage requirements to ensure all Oregonians have access to the full spectrum of reproductive care they need, without arbitrary financial barriers. By threatening to penalize Oregon and other states for protecting these fundamental freedoms, your department actively seeks to undermine states' rights, and the will of our citizens.

It has become painfully obvious that the Trump administration cares about state's rights but only when the states' views align with Republicans' extremist ideology. When states enact policies that align with your political agenda, you allow states to conduct business without federal interference. Yet, when states like Oregon exercise their prerogative to protect women's health and reproductive freedom, you deploy the full weight of the federal government to intimidate and interfere. Make no mistake: this move is purely politically motivated. It is not designed to uphold the law, but to appease a partisan base at the direct expense of Oregon's autonomy and women's basic health and safety.

Oregon will not be bullied by a federal department attempting to impose its ideological agenda on our local health care system. We will fiercely defend our laws, our health care providers, and our residents' right to access essential medical care with the utmost privacy and respect.

We demand that you immediately drop this baseless investigation and get out of my state's business. Let Oregon govern Oregon.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee on Budget